

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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WMATA METRO TRAIN DERAILMENT *

IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, *

ON OCTOBER 12, 2020 *

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Interview of: OLUKAYODE OLAWUNMI, Rail Traffic Controller
 Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Landover, Maryland

Friday
 October 15, 2021

APPEARANCES:

STEPHEN JENNER, Operations and Human Performance Group
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

GREG KUPKA, Deputy Chief of Safety Assurance
Safety Department

BRUCE WALKER, Subject Matter Expert for Operations
Washington Metro Safety Commission

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Olukayode Olawunmi:		
By Dr. Jenner		5
By Mr. Kupka		28
By Mr. Walker		29
By Dr. Jenner		35
By Mr. Kupka		42
By Dr. Jenner		43

I N T E R V I E W

DR. JENNER: Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Jenner, and I am with the NTSB serving as the Operations and Human Performance Group Chairman for this accident.

Today is October 15th, 2021. We are here at Carmen Turner Facility in Landover, Maryland, to conduct an interview with a rail traffic controller who works for WMATA.

This interview is in conjunction with NTSB's investigation of the October 12th, 2021 derailment of the Metro train in Arlington, Virginia. The NTSB Reference Number is RRD22LR001.

The purpose of this investigation is to increase safety and not assign fault, blame or liability.

Before we begin our interview and questions, we'll go around the table and introduce ourselves and please spell your name and your title and who you're with. Again, my name is Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r, and I'm a Operations and Human Performance Investigator with the NTSB. And, we'll go to my right.

MR. KUPKA: Hello. My name is Greg Kupka, G-r-e-g, K-u-p-k-a. I'm representing the WMATA Safety Department, and my title is Deputy Chief of Safety Assurance.

MR. WALKER: My name is Bruce Walker. Bruce, B-r-u-c-e, Walker, W-a-l-k-e-r. I'm with the Washington Metro Safety Commission, and my title is Subject Matter Expert of Operations.

MR. OLAWUNMI: And my name is Olukayode Olawunmi, O-l-u-k-a-

1 y-o-d-e, O-l-a-w-u-n-m-i. And I'm a rail traffic controller.

2 DR. JENNER: Thank you. Do we have your permission to tape
3 record this discussion?

4 MR. OLAWUNMI: Yes, you do.

5 DR. JENNER: Thank you.

6 INTERVIEW OF OLUKAYODE OLAWUNMI

7 BY DR. JENNER:

8 Q. So if you would, would you just start off by telling us your
9 background in the transit world? When did you get started? And,
10 what other jobs you may have had all the way up to your current
11 position.

12 A. Prior to joining WMATA 2 years ago, I was a rail traffic
13 controller. I worked previously in -- I used to be a flight
14 dispatcher. I worked for, you know, an air carrier back in
15 Nigeria. And when I moved to the United States, I worked with
16 Collins Aerospace which is based out of Annapolis, pretty much
17 business aviations flight operations management. And, you know,
18 joined WMATA 2 years ago as a rail traffic controller, certified
19 in November of last year and been working the console on the --
20 sometimes on the L (ph.) shift and sometimes on the dayshift in
21 the past year.

22 Q. Certified 1 year ago?

23 A. Yes, about a year ago.

24 Q. Okay. So did you go through formal training at WMATA?

25 A. Yes, I went through formal training at WMATA.

1 Q. All right. If you can just give an overview of that type of
2 training.

3 A. Pretty much track training that we went through was, we went
4 through trains training which is pretty much operations on what
5 train operators do. We went through the whole classroom component
6 of it except for, you know, certification and actually operating
7 the trains.

8 And after we completed that, that training, then we switched
9 over the AIMS (ph.) training which is pretty much the rail traffic
10 controller training where pretty much you go through trainings
11 and, you know, heavy management, schedule of the (indiscernible),
12 you know, how to management the railroad, fans training,
13 communications training, incident management and, you know, the
14 whole complement of things that we experience on a day-to-day
15 management of the WMATA rail system.

16 Q. Okay. Is there an OJT portion to this?

17 A. There is an OJT portion to it. OJT lasts about, about 3
18 months. You spend a month on each, on each shift which is because
19 the dayshift, the mid shift and the L shift, the complements of
20 what we do on those shifts, you know. The morning and the
21 afternoon shift, it's a bit similar but on the L shift, it's a
22 whole different ball game. And, you know, you get to, you get to
23 learn how to work, how to work the radio or work the buttons as
24 well. So I call it, you know, you become four different people
25 when you work the WMATA rail traffic control position.

1 Q. Now during a workweek, is it possible that some days you'll
2 be the button guy and some days you'll be the radio guy?

3 A. Very much that's it. Some days you're the buttons guy. Some
4 days you're the radio guy. It just depends on, you know, we don't
5 have assigned shifts -- other shifts. It just depends on who you
6 work with. You don't even know who you're working with when you
7 come into work. You just come into work and, you know, whatever
8 console is open, you take that console.

9 Q. Okay. So, thanks, thanks for your background. So if you
10 would, just tell me about your day. What time did you go on duty
11 and --

12 A. On October 12th, I came into work at 2 p.m. that afternoon.
13 A pretty quiet day. I picked to work ops number 2, which is the
14 Blue and Silver console, worked the buttons console, had my
15 partner on there. He had a student as well. Things were pretty
16 quiet when we came into work. Usually, you know, you look at the
17 line, just try to get a -- you get a pass down from whoever you're
18 relieving who tells you about all that's going on.

19 You sign your logs and, you know, just kind of take a look at
20 the railroad. People manage their railroad differently. People
21 are comfortable to keep the, you know, trains running 2 minutes
22 off. I'm not comfortable with it. I want everybody to be on
23 time, you know. Just kind of take a look at my squigs (ph.) and
24 just try to make sure everybody's where they need to be, checking
25 on my supervisors, make sure my supervisors are where they need to

1 be and, you know, pretty much.

2 It was pretty quiet. Nothing going on, you know. I think
3 around, you know, earlier in the day, there was somebody who said,
4 you know, they had seen a deer running around on a track somewhere
5 around Cheverly or Landover, you know. People requesting access
6 to go several rooms, power personnel going to rooms, just pretty
7 normal stuff that you do every day when you, when you come into
8 work, just how to manage the railroad.

9 And I think it was around 1650 hours when the operator on
10 Train 709 had called in a stuck holding brake on that train. And
11 is this where I go into details on what happened on the incident?

12 Q. Please do.

13 A. Yeah. He called in a stuck holding brake on that -- on the
14 train. And what I did was pretty much, you know, tried to cancel
15 signals, make sure no other train was going into that area where
16 the train, you know, track number 2 side going towards Arlington
17 Cemetery, making sure no other train got behind him because I
18 think I may have to -- the signals was a Blue, Orange, Silver.
19 The Blue, Orange Line kept on going towards Vienna. The Silver
20 train went towards Vienna. So we stopped the Blue Line train just
21 outside of the Foggy Bottom interlocking, as I remember correctly,
22 to hold over there because we didn't know what was going on with
23 it.

24 When they said it was holding -- he had a stuck holding
25 brake, which is pretty much a trouble shooting problem. We call

1 for people to help them out. We call for people to help them out.
2 We call for supervisors to kind of like help them out, but I was
3 listening to the radio and I had to make notifications. I called
4 the assistant operations manager to let him know. Notified the
5 rail operations information center which is -- right, to let them
6 know we had a train which was -- which had a stuck holding brake.

7 Since the Rhode Island Avenue incident which was about -- it
8 was about a couple of months back, WMATA's been, you know, the
9 policy has been, you know, it's never, it's never, you know, a
10 good thing to have trains holding up at platforms, you know. We
11 were like concerned about the train being off the platform.

12 So throughout all of that, I had my partner trying to, you
13 know, pretty much troubleshoot the train. And, you know, I had to
14 take a look at the other sections of the line, if I could stop
15 anybody with the red signal, take a turn back somewhere, you know,
16 just line management, just taking it all the way down to Longhorn
17 (ph.), New Carrollton, just to make sure no other trains were
18 holding up the platforms. Based on my experience, it's usually
19 not where the incident is that the problem is. The problem is
20 something else could pop up somewhere and, you know, that was at
21 the back of my mind just saying, oh, I don't want a train loading
22 off a platform, somebody pushing and the manager said, no, leave
23 her over there.

24 When the operator called in the stuck brake, it was around
25 1652. He said car 7200. Somebody had just punched him up and

1 said there was smoke on the car. When they said it was smoke on
2 the car, you know, we had the assistant operations manager and
3 they were trying to troubleshoot it at that time. And, you know,
4 what my partner had told him, I heard he had told him to activate
5 the power knockout on that. Procedure says, you know, when you
6 have a stuck -- when something causes smoke on a car, you proceed
7 to the next platform.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. So -- and, you know, the area where they were at, I looked at
10 it. It was coming down from Rosslyn approaching Arlington
11 Cemetery. My recollection of the area was it was an outdoor area.
12 When they turned on the cameras in the ROCC, everything that I saw
13 was, you know, pretty much outside. So when they said smoke on
14 the train -- when it says smoke on the train, he said -- like I
15 remember, he said, all right. Power knockout. Take it to the
16 platform to offload the customers. Then he called back and they
17 said -- I think he said, central, it won't let me go up this hill.
18 When he said it wouldn't let me go up this hill, that's when I had
19 my partner tell him to (indiscernible), go back and cut out the
20 trucks on it.

21 Right around that time, I was still making notifications. I
22 tried to call -- I was about to dial the number for MTPD to let
23 them know that we've got a train off of a platform. When I called
24 them, the phone rang and transit called me and said somebody -- a
25 customer just called them and said there's smoke on car 7200. I

1 told site transit, I said, we're aware of it. We were told that
2 we have a train that had a stuck holding brake which is holding.
3 It's in Arlington Cemetery and, you know, coming down from Rosslyn
4 towards -- approaching Arlington Cemetery. And I -- and at that
5 time, the train was on the move. So I told transit, the train was
6 on the move.

7 So pretty much I remember looking back at the, you know, when
8 they said smoke, I -- when they said smoke, I think the operations
9 manager was, you know, somewhere on the floor and I was like,
10 smoke, and we were asking ourselves questions, smoke. And I was
11 like, oh, is it a hot brake and the smoke -- are the brakes still
12 applied to it because pretty much what I was saying about it is,
13 that I know is, you know, when you had a stuck holding brake, and
14 you have to hit the power knockout, and you don't cut out the
15 trucks, there's always a little bit of smoke associated with it
16 from the brakes. You have hot brakes, the wheels hit off, and you
17 have a little smoke on it. So I didn't, you know, I didn't think
18 anything because I expected that they were outside as well.

19 So when we told the operator to go back, go cut the trucks,
20 he came back and said he wouldn't let it go up the hill and when
21 he was trying to move, I saw the AIMS indication and then I saw
22 the second log that the power breakers, you know, they were kind
23 of like tripping. They tripped and they came back on. They
24 tripped and they came back on. And that was when he called and
25 said, hey, it wouldn't let me go up the hill. So we told him to

1 go back, go cut off the trucks on it.

2 And it was around 1700 that he had called and then said,
3 Central, 7201, 7200, it looks like a pull apart. So, you know,
4 when he said it looks like a pull apart, you know, I just switched
5 to a different mode. It was like pull apart. That's when I de-
6 energized power on track number 2 side, took it all the way to
7 Arlington Cemetery platform on track number 2 side.

8 You know, when they take them down all the way to Rosslyn
9 because I wasn't sure it was going to take power down on the
10 platform side on track number 2 side to Rosslyn. So, you know,
11 just managing it. 408 was still outside of -- was on the platform
12 at Foggy Bottom. So I told 408 clear the interlock and offload at
13 Foggy Bottom because we're turning transit around Foggy Bottom for
14 it to go back in service. So pretty much, just made sure nothing
15 could go to the Arlington Cemetery side.

16 But I had my partner call in -- he had called unit 53 and he
17 had called (indiscernible). They were all out at National
18 Airport. They got -- I think it would have been Train 401 if I
19 remember correctly coming on track number 1 side, and because I
20 knew help was coming, that's why, even when they called the pull
21 apart, we didn't take down power on track number 1 side.

22 So when they came in on track number 1, they called the chain
23 marker. He said it was Charlie 1171+00. They requested the
24 fallout time, you know, with set up protection, blue block, human
25 (ph.) form and stuff we put up.

1 He exited a train on -- they exited a train on track number 1
2 side, and they said, you know, they went back there to, you know,
3 to assist pretty much. And I remember shouting out to my partner,
4 I said, look, 7200, whatever's going on out there, get a
5 headcount. You need to move them away, and they said -- you know,
6 after they called in the pull apart, I say, get a headcount.
7 You've got to move them away and get a headcount. And they called
8 and they said they had about 25 customers on 7200. That's what
9 they told us.

10 So when 53 got there, first thing we told them to do was to,
11 you know, hot stick and verify the power was down. And they
12 called around 1707 to say power was down. So when the trainmen
13 and trackmen were cleared, you know, we decided to, you know, drop
14 power on track number 1 side, pretty much essentially shutting
15 down that entire area.

16 So I mean it went on. I kept trying to keep managing the
17 line. I wasn't able to write down anything until around 1724
18 after that, you know, (indiscernible) 53, what's the situation out
19 there? And they said we're ready to evacuate, and they said a lot
20 of it was already in place, to evacuate the customers.

21 Then around 1727, we were still trying to confirm, well,
22 what's going on with the train? Was it a pull apart or what? He
23 actually confirmed that the trucks were on the ground. I remember
24 him saying the trucks on 7200 are on the ground. We're about to
25 check. And then they confirmed that around 1727.

1 Then we asked him how many people are on the train? He said
2 city load. He said city load. I'm like, what's city load? I was
3 like give me a landline. He called me on the phone to say a city
4 load, he said it looks like there's people in every car on the
5 train. It looks about 400 people on this train, and we're like,
6 oh, 400 people.

7 So in my mind, you know, some decisions were out of my hand.
8 Assistant operations manager was going to decide, you know. I
9 knew we were going to evacuate. We had to evacuate and, you know,
10 we always think about evacuation to the roadway as a last resort.
11 He had called the fire department. Everybody had called whoever
12 they needed to call. I think -- when did they say fire department
13 on the scene? I can't remember when they said fire -- fire
14 department on the scene. They called the fire department on the
15 scene at 1743. That's when I had fire department was on the
16 scene. And, you know, people start calling in.

17 I think unit -- it would be 36, he called me -- because the
18 phone just kept ringing. Supervisors calling in. I want to go
19 over there. I want -- can I go? Where do you want me? Where do
20 you want me? Where do you want me? I said everybody just kind of
21 head down towards Rosslyn. If we're going to need you, Rosslyn,
22 we can, you know, pick you up from Rosslyn for you to go down
23 there.

24 I think it was around 1937 that -- I think a supervisor, I
25 remember he had called me and said transit is on the platform at

1 Rosslyn, and they, they want power down on the Rosslyn side. And
2 I'm like okay. So it was around that same time that the assistant
3 operations manager walked up to me and said, hey, you've got to
4 take them down all the way to track number 2 side of Rosslyn, and
5 I was like okay. So we took down power all the way, you know.
6 The way that the AIMS indication, you know, draws the line, when
7 you said Rosslyn Tunnel, you know, it looks a little bit off,
8 where the number, the way you got the switches on it, well, when
9 you take down the power on it, you see the power indication, power
10 down on that line all the way up towards Rosslyn.

11 So pretty much we were turning the Blue Line transit at
12 Rosslyn -- I'm sorry -- at Foggy Bottom, the way that I
13 established service back on track number 1 side. Silver Line
14 transit going to Willow Rest (ph.), and the Orange Line transit
15 was going to Vienna. And we were able to, you know, they were
16 turning around the Blue Line transit at L'Enfant Plaza -- at Mount
17 Vernon Square. So pretty much making announcements to customers
18 to exit at L'Enfant Plaza, transfer out if they want to catch the
19 Blue Line train to Franconia-Springfield.

20 So I mean pretty much around that time, you know, I
21 understand the SOP1A (ph.), how, you know, an incident goes from
22 incident commander, fire department, clears everybody, goes to
23 everybody.

24 But, after they had called them and said they wanted to
25 approach the train from track number 2 side, then I was like, you

1 know, it kept playing things in my head. I kept playing it in my
2 head, and I was asking myself, these people down here. What's
3 going on down here? I don't have a visual of what's going on.
4 But in my mind, you know, you still have people over there. You
5 still -- I still have people on the roadway. They're going down
6 over there. I knew, you know, coming down to Rosslyn Tunnel,
7 there's a tunnel over there, and that was when I just, you know, I
8 turned on the fans at Rosslyn. I was like if there's people down
9 here, going out of here.

10 I did use the playbooks. I just took it -- I took it from a
11 perspective of it being a work location. And I'm like if there's
12 people down here, you know, just set these fans to just keep
13 exhausting. So -- which is like when you have an incident, even,
14 you know, the first thing that you do, whichever area that you
15 have, you set the fans to emergency on exhaust. Just whatever's
16 going on there, just keep taking it out of here, just keep taking
17 it out of here.

18 And being not very familiar with the geography of the place,
19 I was just like, okay, let me just set this to, you know, exhaust
20 the fans over here. And, you know, then subsequently track --
21 emergency response team, ERT 667, arrived on the scene. They
22 request a fallout time. People still requesting fallout times, to
23 actually go, to go see what it was.

24 I remember -- so after I took the power down, they confirmed
25 the power was down on the Rosslyn Tunnel. They confirmed that the

1 fire department on the scene. Power department is here. He
2 wanted to do a power inspection, you know. You've got crews
3 coming in, coming in.

4 Then I think it was around 1821, 53 called it in, he said,
5 you know, the first person is evacuated, you know, at Charlie
6 2067+00 and, you know, they said, around 34 (ph.), fire department
7 was escorting the customers to -- out into Cemetery track number
8 2. The first customers hit the platform at 1854. The train clear
9 was -- they said the train was clear, about 50 customers to go,
10 and at 1916 the last customers were on the platform around that
11 time.

12 And subsequently they turned it over. Track personnel
13 called. I remember one of the track guys, he called me and said,
14 he found, he found a brake component. He found it somewhere on
15 the line and on track number 2 side. And he was like, he was
16 requesting fallout time to move it. I told him don't touch it.
17 He called me on the phone. I said don't touch it, you know. Do
18 you understand what it means when you have an accident, you have
19 something -- it's a scene that, you know, people will want to take
20 a look at what's going on out there. And I make sure I instructed
21 him to not touch it.

22 And pretty much, you know, I just kept on managing the line,
23 trying to just -- we didn't have a headway. We tried to tell the
24 terminals to go to turn at the headway but they weren't able to do
25 that but, you know, we just have to get to your service and pretty

1 much in my mind I just kind of like kept playing it all in my
2 head, what's going on out here, what's going on out here. It's
3 out of my hands. It's out of my hands but if there's anything I
4 could do, just keep, you know, just keep helping.

5 So between my partner and I, we just, you know, kept trying
6 to monitor the line, held this train over there, hold that train
7 over there, make sure, hey, if anything else comes up, we don't
8 actually, you know, want to drop the ball on that because we
9 pretty much -- it's a big fence (ph.) as we say. We don't want
10 customers evacuating into the roadway and, you know, even as a
11 matter of trains going back-to-back, you don't want them getting
12 too close to each other because anything could go wrong with this
13 train and if anything goes wrong, you know, you have customers
14 holding up at the platform at this time. So that was just pretty
15 much what was in the back of my mind. We have a train down but,
16 you know, we don't want something else to pop up somewhere.

17 Q. Terrific. That was great. Thank you. So I just have a few
18 questions. That was great details. So thank you. You talk about
19 line management.

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. If I understood that, you performed the line management
22 through, through the signal system.

23 A. Through the signal system, yes, and it's one of the things
24 that you try to understand -- that we understand is, if I have to
25 take a red signal, because I'm managing the line, I was -- that's

1 one of the reasons why I said I was trying to prevent something
2 else from happening. Because the radios are choppy. They're not
3 the best radios. You make sure you get a verbal confirmation
4 from, from an operator to say, hey, that signal's going to turn
5 red before you actually turn it red because you risk a red signal
6 overrun (ph.) which is something different at that point in time.

7 But with a turn back, that's easier. You're taking the
8 speed commands away, but because when you tell somebody to hold,
9 you're talking about 10, 15 trains at a time. You say 601 hold.
10 602 hold. 603 hold at this station. Hold. It gets missing
11 somewhere, and if somebody doesn't hear, when you tell them to
12 hold, if you don't get that read back from them, you're trying to
13 talk to about 300 people at the same time.

14 And, you know, my experience is even when you talk, it just
15 -- when you're in the radio position, it's like you're talking a
16 whole lot. It's like, you have operators that are not just, you
17 know, in the mood to talk, you know. You're like I heard you.
18 You talk back to them and then they'll say, Central, I heard you.
19 But I'm supposed to get 100 percent read back. I get upset about
20 it all the time when I don't get it. And I'm like, you know, I
21 put a supervisor on it, hey, go instruct this person when
22 Central's talking to you, you know, I do it. It happens all the
23 time. I see people look at me. They get mad at me for doing
24 that. I'm just like, please just talk, you know. I just need to
25 hear what you're saying because, you know.

1 I've been here for a year and, you know, I'm saying, you
2 know, experience is the best teacher sometimes. You just want to
3 make sure that people understand. And, knowing that I speak
4 English a different way because, you know, not exactly the way
5 that, you know, in the WMATA terms, being that I didn't start my
6 career with WMATA. So usually when I'm talking, I just want make
7 sure that whoever I'm talking to, you explicitly understand what
8 I'm trying to tell you to do. So when I say -- I'm trying to get
9 how you understand what I'm trying to tell you to do because in my
10 previous job, I talked to pilots all the time. And there was
11 never a problem, you know. We, you know, talking about the flight
12 plan, walking through stuff. There was a customer service aspect
13 to my job, and I just kind of knew, you know, yes, I'm talking to
14 you. Are we on the same page?

15 So pretty much that day, with the line management, it was
16 pretty much okay. You hold over there. You hold over there. You
17 hold over there, making sure everybody was listening, but if
18 somebody wasn't listening, you know, and I -- we could see that,
19 oh, you're still at the interlocking, way back over there, and
20 this goes red. Yes, you will stop, you know, without speaker
21 mands with a red signal, you will stop the train. So pretty much
22 that's, you know, it's just working together with my partner and
23 just making sure, you know, where, where I could help him out with
24 the signaling system. I helped him out with the signaling
25 system. That's about it, you know, we do it like that.

1 Q. I see. As a RTC, are you able to see any of the trouble
2 alerts or alarms that come on a train's control panel?

3 A. No.

4 Q. You're just completely relying on him to tell you?

5 A. Whatever the train operator tells us. And it was one of the
6 things that, you know, when he called in the stuck holding brake,
7 you know, I've done the stuck holding brake before, like a
8 troubleshooting guide says, it's like you have to make a split
9 second decision call. Sometimes, hey, it was rush hour pretty
10 much. We had more trains than, you know, pre-pandemic times that
11 we had on the line, and when he -- I think when he, when he said,
12 you know, the brakes were smoking already, then when they said
13 smoke, that just kind of like, okay, you need to get this train to
14 the platform, get the customers off the train as soon as possible.
15 That was the only thing that was in my mind.

16 So ideally if he was -- if he have the time, we'll tell him
17 go back there, you know, cut out the trucks on it. I mean knowing
18 he was close to the platform, I mean looking at the AIMS
19 indication where he called it in, knowing it was close to the
20 platform, that we told him, you know, take it to the platform. If
21 he had been in an area where it had been say Franconia-
22 Springfield, down in that area where's out of nowhere, no, he
23 would have taken all the time he needed to actually, you know, cut
24 the trucks and, you know. Because I remember my partner telling
25 me, take the train to the platform, offload it, it's out of

1 service. That's what he said.

2 So -- but we don't see what -- what's going on with the
3 train. Sometimes we rely on the guys on the back and say, hey,
4 what's going -- this is what's going on, on this train, and
5 they'll be like, okay. This is what's going on, on this train,
6 and call a stuck holding brake, whatever the operator says. They
7 go back to check it, check it out over there.

8 But one thing that I didn't hear them say was even when they
9 call it a pull apart and he said it was a pull apart. And we
10 asked them, do you have brake line pressure because based on my
11 training, you train for these scenarios but you're never really
12 prepared for it, but there are things that you should still listen
13 for. When he said he had brake line pressure, then I knew, okay,
14 you still had the entire consist in there. You didn't leave
15 anybody behind, nothing's gone. Okay. That's fine. So, you
16 know, it's a normal stuck holding brake. It happens all the time.
17 We hear a stuck holding brake all the time.

18 Q. When you say all the time, what --

19 A. Pretty much, you know, it's, it's not uncommon for you to
20 have an operator call in a stuck holding brake. It's a problem
21 that, you know, anything could go wrong with the train. It's
22 like, okay, so the major -- all the trains, when we trouble shoot
23 the trains, there are two things that we -- it's either all door
24 closed or no brakes released or, you know, no brakes released or
25 no brakes off which are just like, I mean as a rail traffic

1 controller, when it comes to troubleshooting, those are the three
2 things that I know. Okay. You've got to pay attention to this.
3 And, you know, is it -- do you have a brake fault or you have a
4 door fault? You know, one of those things. Those are the things
5 that, you know, hold the line up so to say which is if you have a
6 train down, it's either going to be a brake problem or it's going
7 to be, it's going to be a door problem. It's one of the two
8 pretty much, call it about 75 percent of the time.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. That's why I said, you know, and the brakes, you know, the
11 brake problem is kind of like, you know, there's different levels
12 to it. There's no brakes release, no brakes off which is, you
13 know, when the ATC (ph.) system doesn't release your brakes or you
14 don't have speed commands or, you know, something. You probably
15 have a brake malfunction which is where we cut out the trucks and,
16 you know, or a door problem. So those are the three, you know,
17 major problems that we pretty much encounter with the trains so to
18 say. That's why I said it's a stuck holding brake. It happens,
19 you know, fairly often.

20 Q. You discussed a lot of people who you've had to communicate
21 with like early into this event. You had to call this person and
22 that person. How do you know who to call?

23 A. So, whenever we have an incident, there's a -- pretty much
24 the chain of command so to say. You send out your notifications.
25 In a way, you're calling for your help and you're letting who

1 needs to know know, all the way to, you know, executive
2 management. So for me, at my level, once I let my assistant
3 operations manager know, he escalates. He assesses the
4 information out there. I let the rail -- the ROCC we call them,
5 rail operations information center know. They send out the alerts
6 to the stations, let them know.

7 So if I'm single tracking, if I'm suspending service
8 somewhere, whatever's going on, they are able to let everybody
9 know, and they send out the companywide alerts. I'll let transit
10 know, too, MTPD, you know, depending if it's a sick customer, if
11 we're going to need the fire department, whatever it is, they
12 alert the first responders as well. And, you know, the only other
13 person that I need to let know is, you know, my eyes on the ground
14 which is always the rail supervisor. We call the supervisor or a
15 car (ph.) equipment person. Those are the only people that I
16 need to know.

17 But the phones won't stop ringing. You don't know who's on
18 the other side of the line. Somebody wants information or
19 somebody needs instructions. And says, hey, this is -- the
20 radios, it can be very, very challenging working with the radios.
21 So usually, you know, somebody calls the line because the line's
22 numbers are out there during an incident, you know. That's just
23 -- the phones just keep ringing non-stop.

24 Q. I understand that there's some procedure guides at the desk?

25 A. Yes, we have a couple of checklists on the console. We have

1 a checklist and emergency ventilation playbooks on the console.

2 Q. All right. Did you, did you refer to any of these checklists
3 during this event?

4 A. For the, for the -- when they called in the -- I wasn't able
5 to -- when they called in, they called in the stuck holding brake.
6 So for that we had to refer to the trouble shooting guide. But
7 when they said it was a derailment, you know, I referred to the
8 checklist for the derailment, the aspect of it and, you know, just
9 kind of like making sure, you know, things that I needed to, to
10 have done with them.

11 Q. So you went in and pulled that out and had that in front of
12 you?

13 A. It wasn't in front of me at that time, no, no. But, you
14 know, some things, I'd say I relied on muscle memory for a couple
15 of them because it's part of the training. It's part of the
16 training but I had so much going on, and reacting in real time. I
17 didn't -- if he had called in and said, Central, I have derailed,
18 you know, he said it was a pull apart, he said it was a stuck
19 holding brake. Then he went to a, he went to a stuck holding
20 brake to a pull apart. Then -- so we eventually understood it was
21 a derailment.

22 One of my fears was, you know, one thing could lead to the
23 other thing. I'm like, okay, so a stuck holding brake. It's a
24 pull apart. And they pretty much most of the procedures are all
25 the same. First thing you hear, it's like when you hear a person

1 stuck on a train, before you even pull out the checklist, the
2 first thing that you do is take down the power. So when they said
3 it was pull apart and stuff like that, you know, the way the
4 checklist are reading, once you take down the power, you set up
5 that there -- in a tunnel, you set up the emergency ventilations.
6 You make your notifications and you have eyes on the ground. You
7 established SOP1A (ph.), you know, it's pretty much out of your
8 hands because there's -- you're down here a CTF, you know, it's
9 like you're deferring to instructions that you hear on the ground
10 to actually, you know, carry on, you know, instructions that you
11 receive. You react to the instructions that you receive.

12 I mean sometimes it's -- how do I describe it? It's, it's a
13 fluid situation. It just gets -- it evolves. It evolves all the
14 time. It evolves all the time and, you know, what we do with a
15 checklist, it's -- it gives you a baseline on what to do, but you
16 really, like I said, you're trained for it but you don't really
17 know how to react to it. When you hear something else, then you
18 react this way. You hear something else, you react that way. The
19 baseline things that we're supposed to do on the checklist, you
20 know, you commit that to memory because you're sitting there with
21 your partner, your bouncing off ideas but you understand, what if
22 something happened right now. So that's the way it is.

23 Q. So I heard you -- well, from your description and from your
24 words I think you said, you had so much going on. Was, was there
25 in your mind too much going on? Did you, did you -- were you able

1 to do everything that you needed to do?

2 A. From my state of mind, I did, I did most of the things that I
3 was supposed to do. You have something in your mind that you
4 think you're supposed to do. It's one of those things you get on
5 the job, you got something that you're supposed to do or you want
6 to do and, you know, something changes it that you have to start
7 thinking a different way. And as a, you know, and with the way
8 things are, when an incident's going on, you have an idea in your
9 mind. You can check with the assistant operations manager, but
10 they see things a different way, too. So it's like, okay. This
11 is what I think we should do. This is what they want to do. And
12 when you let them know, and they say, this is what you should do,
13 you do what they want you to do pretty much.

14 Q. Okay. So I heard you say you did most of the things you
15 wanted to or needed to do. But, can you think of anything that
16 you, you weren't able to do?

17 A. With that incident? I can't think of anything off the top of
18 my head now. I've been trying to play it all back in my head but
19 I can't, you know, it's been a couple of days since. I mean, I'm
20 playing it all back in my head right now. I can't.

21 Q. Have you received after the incident, maybe the next --
22 either that -- after the shift, after everything was managed, did
23 any of your managers, supervisors talk to you about how they think
24 things went?

25 A. Yes, they did. They said, you know, I mean they pretty much

1 said we did a good job. That's all they said.

2 Q. I see. That's all the questions I have now. Do you need a
3 break or we'll just continue?

4 A. No, we can continue.

5 DR. JENNER: Okay. So I'll just go to my right.

6 BY MR. KUPKA:

7 Q. Hi, Greg Kupka, with Safety. When you say assistant
8 operations manager, is that rail III?

9 A. Rail III.

10 Q. Okay. I know it's relatively new. I'm just making sure.
11 And then some basic questions that we typically ask are what are
12 your days off?

13 A. I have Thursdays and Fridays off.

14 Q. Thank you for coming in on a Friday.

15 A. You're welcome.

16 Q. And you said your normal shift is 2 to 10?

17 A. 2 to 10 p.m.

18 Q. In terms of fatigue, when do you typically go to bed and wake
19 up?

20 A. I pretty much when I get home, by midnight I'm out and
21 usually I'm up at 7 a.m. in the morning.

22 Q. Okay. And on Tuesday, were you feeling -- how was your --
23 how were you feeling?

24 A. I was feeling okay.

25 MR. KUPKA: Okay. And actually that's all I have for now.

1 BY MR. WALKER:

2 Q. This is Bruce Walker with the WMSC. So, just a quick
3 question. So there was a report of smoke on a car.

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. How do you determine or how do you know if the car's in a
6 tunnel or if they're in an open outside area?

7 A. So to determine -- back in training, you know, part of the
8 things you learn, you know the stations that are outside and you
9 know the stations that are underground.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. There's a certain, certain route that you know that are
12 either outside or underground. The only way you would know if
13 they're in a tunnel, based on my experience, because I never
14 operated a train, so I don't really understand, you know, I've
15 never been in the tunnels, you know. I ride the trains on my days
16 off sometimes just to kind of like get a feel of what I do, but
17 there's no indication to let me know that you're above ground,
18 that you're underground or you're above ground. There's really
19 nothing, aside from the platforms that I know, you know, from
20 understanding my alphanumerics, know my stations, that I know to
21 be outside. There's no indication that I'm aware of to let you
22 know. The way it's been instructed, it doesn't, it doesn't, you
23 know, let you know what the tunnels are.

24 The only other way I could know is if I look at the roadway
25 access guide that tells me where the hot spots are, and usually I

1 default to that when I have a person walking on the roadway.

2 That's when I call in for fall time, whatever I need to do and hot
3 spot platform limits and places that you have from the roadway
4 access guide. So you rely on chain markers pretty much to
5 actually tell where they are.

6 Q. Okay. So when this incident train went -- you received a
7 report of the incident on this train, how do you determine if
8 you're going to initiate fans or not initiate fans? What was your
9 -- how did you come to that decision?

10 A. The chain marker, when he -- when, when he called it in, when
11 I looked up the fans schematic, the way the fan was placed from
12 where the location of the train was -- from where the location of
13 the train was, you have, you know, a fan schematic over there. It
14 was way, way back. So it made it appear like, you know, they were
15 closer to the platform and, you know, when we activate the power
16 knockout, going towards the platform trying to get towards the
17 platform and looking up, I saw they were outside. So that's where
18 I just -- it just didn't -- it didn't occur to me that, oh, they
19 could be in a tunnel or they were underground. It didn't occur to
20 me that way, no.

21 Q. Okay. So then when did you decide that you were going to put
22 the fan on to exhaust?

23 A. When, when transit called and said they were going to
24 approach from Rosslyn. The supervisor called me. He said they
25 were going to approach the area from Rosslyn, and when, you know,

1 when I started seeing on the screen where -- when he said they
2 were going to approach from Rosslyn, I saw people coming in, they
3 request a foul time for them to go down there. Granted the fallout
4 plan was to approach from Rosslyn area, and I was like, okay,
5 they're in -- I know Rosslyn, the tunnel, Rosslyn is underground.
6 So I, you know, I just said, all right, just exhaust the fan at
7 Rosslyn.

8 Q. Okay. You had mentioned earlier that you just do what they
9 want you to do. So you had said you had your plan on what it is
10 that you wanted to do, and then I guess you called it the AO, the
11 rail supervisor III.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. And you said that you just do what they want you to do. How
14 do you determine when you have your -- as the rail transportation
15 or rail controller expert --

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. -- you have your plan. How does that -- do you determine to
18 listen to your plan or the management's plan?

19 A. I call it collaborated decision making.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. It's -- I have an idea. I'm not -- I mean I might have a
22 plan but I'm not the brightest person in the room, you know. I
23 like to listen to what they want to say and by the end of the day,
24 we're both accountable. My manager and I are both accountable,
25 and even with my partner as well. I, you know, you want to make a

1 move. You check with him. Are you on board with me with this,
2 you know, you're talking to them, making sure you talking to
3 everybody. Even though, you know, you have everything going on,
4 if you're going to make a consequential decision, you know, it's
5 always best to, you know, let the manager know and he sees a lot
6 that we don't see.

7 Sometimes I work the position that we call the AD As Directed
8 position. I ask myself, if I'm in a seat right now, I wouldn't
9 to see a lot of this because you can still sit back and you can
10 actually take a look at the big picture. You see a lot of stuff.
11 That's there, you know, we assist each other. When you have
12 somebody extra on shift, we assist each other. If it's just
13 taking the notes and you see something, somebody say something,
14 hey, did you get this? Did you catch this? Did you catch that?
15 Did you catch that?

16 And, you know, it's like I feel like based on the
17 experience, you know, I rely on them because I haven't been on
18 the job for so long. I rely on them for their experience. So
19 when they, you know, they're -- they've experienced more than I
20 have experienced.
21 And that's why, you know, it's not that I can't make the
22 decisions on my own. There are things that would happen
23 sometimes that I wouldn't -- I would make a decision and then I'm
24 like, oh, this is
25 what happened or we've got this going on. It's like, okay, I'll
let you know. I'm going to start single tracking. I'm going to
start doing it. You can do that.

1 But, if it's a major event like the incident like that, they
2 talking to the fire department. They talking to incident
3 management officer back there. I can't just go on making
4 decisions on my own at that point. I need to know everybody is on
5 the same page. So when they tell me something at that point, I'm
6 like, okay, that's what we're going to do. So transit has
7 requested that, hey, no trains come into the stations. I know I
8 can't transit trains in this station any more. That's when I
9 start sending the trains back. So it's just, you know, it's
10 pretty much a collaborative effort at that point. That's -- so a
11 ton of team work. That's what I mean by, you know, I do what they
12 want me to do.

13 Q. So how would you describe the interaction between yourself,
14 your radio person and the management staff that was working the
15 incident with you?

16 A. There was a lot of information going on with my partner that
17 was working the radio. The way -- the buttons person and the
18 radio person, the way we work sometimes, it just -- it doesn't
19 need to, it doesn't need to say some things, and I get it. I get
20 what he's trying to do. And that's why I said, you know, help him
21 out a little bit. The red signals, the turn backs and stuff like
22 that, because by the end of the day, we're trying to achieve the
23 same goal. And you working with them all the time or you being
24 able to sit in that position, what are you trying to do right now?
25 What am I trying to do right now? You know, what is it I'm trying

1 to do? So he puts a train on hold, I just look around. I'm like,
2 okay, there's a train coming on this side, and he's just like, all
3 right. And then I'm just kind of like -- I'm taking an automatic
4 (ph.). So just to assist him.

5 So it's like we're talking to each other. And if it's like,
6 if he wants something, he tells me he wants something. When he
7 assisted him during this incident, you know, we work together. He
8 had a student on when he initially started. And he stepped in,
9 once the student, when he, you know, when they said that, you
10 know, he stepped in and told the student to pushback. So he took
11 control of it and the assistant manager was -- assistant
12 operations manager was behind us and, you know, he was helpful.
13 He was helpful. He was just kind of like, you know, catching the
14 things that we didn't catch. So he was like, okay, do this or do
15 that, do that, all right.

16 I mean he was the one that says, okay, you can go ahead and
17 drop power on track number 1 at this time. You can go ahead and
18 do this at this time. So based on the information that he was
19 getting from the scene, he was relaying that to me and, you know,
20 just trying to -- I did pretty much my job but the information
21 that I needed to do my job, he, he was giving to me.

22 Q. My final question, so with track 1, power was taken down on
23 track 2 and then track 1. Was there a decision made to begin
24 single tracking around at any point?

25 A. No, no, there was no decision to single track around it.

1 Q. Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

2 DR. JENNER: This is Steve Jenner again.

3 BY DR. JENNER:

4 Q. Let me first start by piggy backing on some of the questions
5 about your shift and days on and days off. So just to clarify,
6 your normal days off are Thursday and Friday?

7 A. Thursdays and Fridays.

8 Q. And your normal shift times are 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Right. And you get home at midnight and --

11 A. No, I live about 30 minutes away. So I'm probably get home
12 10:30, 10:35. I go to bed around midnight.

13 Q. Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. Is that routine for you to go to bed
14 around midnight and wake up at 7 a.m.?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. Do you feel rested when you wake up?

17 A. Yes, I do.

18 Q. Okay. If I can, I'm just going to ask you some questions
19 about your overall health.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. How is your overall health?

22 A. I pretty much -- I'm fine. I don't have no existing
23 conditions now, nothing out of the ordinary. Common cold, pretty
24 much it. Any other thing --

25 Q. Like high blood pressure or --

1 A. No high blood pressure but, you know, I've -- in the past
2 couple of months, I've, you know, talked to my doctor about, it's
3 like, you know, I mean a couple of things I wasn't experiencing.
4 He's like, okay, stress is real and is, you know, and we talked
5 about it, and then there's like, okay. I've had to do an
6 echocardiogram within the past 3 months, just to make sure
7 everything's okay. There are times where -- I mean for a period
8 of time, exercise just became difficult for me, and I just felt
9 like, oh, I was exerting myself. And now my instructions are just
10 kind of like take it slow and just kind of see how things go, and
11 that's pretty much it.

12 Q. Okay. So you felt sort of increased stress the last couple
13 of months but everything medically checked out?

14 A. Everything medically checked out.

15 Q. Okay. Is your -- do you have any diagnosis for any sleep
16 disorders of any type?

17 A. No. Sleep apnea, no. I made sure I check for all of that.
18 No sleep apnea.

19 Q. Okay. Thank you for that. Let me just ask you about the
20 coordination between you and the radio guy. Did you have a lot of
21 interaction during the event?

22 A. Yes. Yes, our interaction was just constant information back
23 and forth. If I -- if somebody called something, I'm like, hey,
24 53 just called and just to keep him in the loop of things. So
25 he's not looking for that information all over again. They just

1 called and customers are -- I'll hear something on the radio. We
2 both hear. If there's something that somebody calls in, then I'll
3 let him know. If it's a supervisor that just called me about
4 Rosslyn, I'm like 36 just checked in. He's at Rosslyn.

5 And, you know, I mentioned earlier, one that I remember very
6 well was, you know, hey, get a headcount. Let us know. We're
7 trying to evacuate. Get a headcount, you know and, you know, I
8 hear what he's saying. Usually what happens, being a radio
9 person, if they miss something, if they miss something, usually
10 I'm like, hey, do this or do that. Did you get that? Did you get
11 that? Get that. So just, you know, it's a partnership.

12 Q. So was he doing the same to you, sharing information as
13 things --

14 A. Yeah, he was sharing information. He was sharing
15 information. He had a student. So the student was back there
16 pretty much. Yeah, information just -- it was just information.
17 We're in the middle of this and so it was like, information just
18 kept flowing back and forth, just to help us get through this
19 incident pretty much.

20 Q. I see. So you've been at this job for about a year.

21 A. I was in training for a year.

22 Q. For about 2 years.

23 A. Two years.

24 Q. Sure. How do you think you may have handled anything
25 differently if you were a radio guy?

1 A. If I was on the radio, if I was on the radio, I think when he
2 called a stuck holding brake, you know, playing it back in my
3 head, when they called a stuck holding brake, I probably would
4 have just said -- I probably would have cut out the trucks before,
5 you know, going to the -- because that would have been me being,
6 you know, on the conservative side. I probably would have done
7 that and say, hey, all right. Go back there.

8 And sometimes, you know, those things is like -- when you
9 look at a trouble shooting guide -- when we look at the trouble
10 shooting guide, to say, hey, this is the way that you go. It
11 gives you a flowchart of things to do. Do this, do that, do that.
12 Based on my experience and things that you see, it's just kind of
13 like there -- you box yourself into a corner sometimes when you,
14 when you going step-by-step-by-step-by-step, which is what I mean
15 by that is, okay, you're doing this, you're doing that. You
16 probably done something that you shouldn't have done.

17 My recommendation, so to say would have been, simplify it,
18 simplify it. Let's say you have this type of problem on it. If
19 it's this type of problem, what's the worst case scenario? That's
20 what I mean by I would have done it differently, what's the worst
21 case scenario? The worst case scenario. This is the worst case
22 scenario. How do I move this train? I would have gone to the
23 worst case scenario, not trying to find the -- it might be this
24 problem. It might be that problem. It might be that problem. It
25 might have been that problem. I would have gone to the worst case

1 scenario, and what was the worst case scenario? At this point in
2 time, it just is -- all right. We're going to recover the train.
3 Don't let us keep trying to fix it. I'm not an engineer. I'm not
4 -- I can't fix this stuff. Worst case scenario would have been --
5 all right.

6 In that situation, I would have just said, look, cut the
7 trucks on it, and cut the trucks on it and, you know -- and, you
8 know, when you cut the trucks, see if you can move. If you can't
9 move, then we'll go to power knock out. That's one other step
10 that I would have -- that I probably would have taken.

11 Q. Okay. Well, let me ask you. I imagine that you, on the days
12 where you are operating the radio --

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. -- and you do have calls in about a similar brake issue, is
15 cutting out the -- cut the trucks, is that part of your directions
16 to the train operator?

17 A. It depends on what the problem tells you. I've had a
18 situation where you don't -- it's, it's a matter of recycle the
19 ATC package. When you're -- so that's what I mean by go to the
20 worst case scenario. Recycle the ATC package. When you recycle
21 the ATC package, the trucks release. If you -- it could be a
22 matter of just keying down the train and then keying it back up
23 and it's like the trucks release.

24 It could be a matter of, you know, you just never know what's
25 going on. It might have been, you know, someone trying to open

1 the doors or something and the train dumps or something, the
2 emergency door or whatever it is. So -- and that's why I said,
3 the worst case scenario is -- we never want to move a train with
4 the trucks stuck. You need a permissive block to move a train
5 with -- when the trucks are stuck because it's ruining (ph.)
6 freight.

7 And, on the conservative, on the conservative side, it's like
8 I have customers on the train, the trucks are cut. We're trying
9 to get them to the platform but it's -- I mean, you're towing it
10 pretty much at that point. You're towing it but you don't have
11 brakes on those trucks at that point. So it's like -- and when we
12 do it, we only use it to move the train to the platform, to get
13 customers off a train.

14 Sometimes it depends on the train, too. I mean I know on the
15 legacy trains, it's kind of like, if you're going to cut the
16 trucks, you don't know what's going on. You will find a stuck
17 holding book -- stuck holding brake that you can get an equipment
18 guy on that. He's going to spend 2 hours on it. He's not be able
19 to figure out what's going on with it. You never know what the
20 problem is.

21 So that's why I said, you know, just default to the, the
22 worst case scenario. I mean it saves you more time. It's a
23 pennywise problem foolish kind of thing. So it's just like,
24 what's the worst that could happen to you? And that's what I mean
25 with the trouble shooting guide. Let's simplify it. We don't

1 need to, you know, keep trying trouble shooting when, you know,
2 the best that we could do is just recover it.

3 And one other thing that I, you know, I feel that I could
4 have done differently, was when he said the train was on the
5 ground, I probably would have just said, hey, move the customers,
6 you know. Which car is it on? Where's the car in your consist?
7 It's on this car. Uncouple that train. Put the customers on
8 these cars and just take them to the platform. That's another
9 option that, you know, I probably would have thought of but, you
10 know, sometimes you feel arms tied because you see it's not the
11 way the things are done over here and when you bring up
12 suggestions like that, you're actually talking outside the box.
13 And when you come up with that, people look at you like you're
14 crazy sometimes, you know, and that's, that's a struggle
15 sometimes.

16 I would have said, you know, I would have just said it's an
17 eight car train, even if it was a four car train, even if it was a
18 two car train, the (indiscernible), have them move into the first
19 two cars, uncouple it, pull them to the platform. But, we had
20 dropped power. So you really couldn't do anything. So you're
21 like damned if you do, damned if you don't. And you really can't
22 bring up the power on it. You had a derailment. You had to drop
23 the power, you know.

24 I try to stay away from news, but when I saw the picture
25 eventually, I saw a dark car, and I was like, wow. The batteries

1 didn't last that long and I kind of like, you know, there should
2 have been some lighting in there. It could have been this, but we
3 had to drop power. We had to drop power, and that's the
4 challenge. If, you know, I think recovering the train, there are
5 ways that we can do it. I mean in this situation, we know that we
6 cut it off -- we had cut off service coming down the Rosslyn
7 Tunnel. It could have been, you know, just trying to get the
8 customers off. What's in my mind at the end of the day is just
9 trying to get the customers, you know.

10 Whatever it is, it's a WMATA problem now. We'll deal with
11 it, but you guys are going somewhere, just keep going where you
12 need to go. Don't worry about it. We apologize about it. Just
13 -- I mean you don't need to be part of all this. Just go about
14 your day. That's the way I look on it.

15 DR. JENNER: We appreciate that. That's all the questions I
16 have. We'll go around the room.

17 BY MR. KUPKA:

18 Q. Just a couple of questions, not specific to the event. I'm
19 sorry. This is Greg Kupka with Safety for the recording. How are
20 the assignments in the ROCC determined at the beginning of the
21 shift? I think it was you that or maybe the other individual that
22 said when you show up at the ROCC, you don't know if you're going
23 to be on ops 1, 2 or 3.

24 A. You don't know. You don't know. You don't know. You don't
25 even know who you're working with. And there's usually -- we're

1 all different people here on the day. I mean there are people
2 you'd enjoy working with, and there are people that are okay. I'd
3 rather not be here today but, you know, it's just personal issues.
4 I mean personal differences and stuff but for the greater good,
5 for what -- for my career, for my job, I know, hey, I can't pick
6 and choose. So I show up to work and, you know, if I just come in
7 and, you know, some -- I get there early. If I get in -- if I
8 come in early, I have the luxury of picking wherever I want to
9 work. So I can just sit on ops number 3 and, you know, sit on ops
10 number 3 and ops number -- buttons or radio, whichever way I'm
11 feeling. If I come in, maybe people get there before I do,
12 whatever slot's open, I'll just take it.

13 Q. Okay. And do you guys ever walk track or -- for line
14 familiarization purposes?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. That's all I have, sir.

17 MR. WALKER: Nothing for me. Thank you.

18 BY DR. JENNER:

19 Q. Okay. This is Steve Jenner again. I don't have any more
20 questions but you sort of alluded to some things earlier but I'll
21 ask specifically. You know, as I mentioned earlier, we're trying
22 to make this a learning experience. And if there's, if there's
23 anything from this event that we can make changes to improve
24 safety a little, then that's our mission. So with that in mind,
25 is there anything that you can think of in terms of procedures or

1 protocol or equipment that could -- that you think would help you
2 manage this situation a little more effectively?

3 A. I think based on protocol, I mean I think I kind of touched
4 on it earlier on. But just -- I think the first responders when
5 they respond sometimes, it's like it confuses me. I get it. I
6 understand they're trying to do what they're trained to do. But
7 when they -- it kind of feels like there's no coordination when
8 they're respond to it because now, you know, the picture that we
9 have, operators are part of the train, was approaching Arlington
10 Cemetery. Every picture that I have in my mind was they were
11 going to approach the train from Arlington Cemetery.

12 So when you call me and say, hey, you coming in from Rosslyn,
13 it throws me off. I'm like where's the train? Where's the train?
14 Why are you going from Rosslyn? I mean I get if you want to do a
15 track inspection, whatever you want to do, investigation,
16 whatever, but that's not their fault. But the customers are still
17 on the train.

18 And another thing that I, you know, it's like communication,
19 it's very, very challenging sometimes when you have this kind of
20 incident because the frequency that we talk on, we're the only
21 ones talking on that frequency. And there's other people who are
22 tangential to what's going on, fire department, police, MTPD,
23 first responders, everybody. They really don't know what we're
24 saying. They don't understand what we're talking about. They
25 don't understand the information that we're giving to them, that

1 we have gone back and forth among ourselves.

2 So it's like, I get the whole concept of, you know, incident
3 commander, was sounding like I'm the sole responsibility for all
4 of this, what's going on, whatever it is, but sometimes it still
5 kind of feels like, you know, okay. You're the incident
6 commander. You know, it's like we can help you. We can help you.
7 We just want you to think outside the box. What can we do to help
8 you?

9 Based on my experience, I've had an incident one time when we
10 had an acting (indiscernible). We had an accident. It was
11 somewhere on the Red Line. Our operator called and they said --
12 we went through all the procedures what we needed to do. When ERT
13 got there, right, ERT, power us down, just shut off it, you know,
14 where it was. And ERT got there, he was like, yeah, just give me
15 a train. Give me a train. I'll take this train. I'll stop at
16 this area. I can walk down there. Are you sure it's safe? Do
17 you know if the fire company is good? Whatever it is. He said,
18 central, I'm fine. He went over there, knocked it out. I want to
19 say knocked it down. When (indiscernible) the situation, and we,
20 you know, we resolved the situation. We were able to start single
21 tracking around and whatever it is, whatever it is to do, whatever
22 it is.

23 So what I'm just saying is, you know, I feel like first
24 responders should be able to talk to the resources that we have.
25 I know a lot of those, like in this situation, rather than

1 evacuate the customers to the roadway, if we had been able to --
2 if we had been able to bring a train on track number 2, you know,
3 close in, you know, when the fire department was on scene, we
4 could have just said, hey, everybody, you know, clear up the
5 roadway. They're going bring up the power again. We're going to
6 put the customers on this train, and just kind of like, take them
7 to the platform. That would have saved us, you know, a lot of
8 time, but I still understand how, you know, a train's down.
9 Nobody really know what's going on, on the tracks in front of it
10 or in front of it, but a train just went past that area. It
11 should have just been a simple track inspection, check or look at
12 it, all right. They're going to evacuate, you know.

13 Pretty much what I'm trying to say is we have to, you know,
14 find a better way of, you know, when we have situations like this,
15 getting the customers off rather than, you know, resorting to
16 walking them on the roadway and stuff. That's just not a pretty
17 look at all, and nobody really likes that. And if we're able to
18 find a way that could, you know, speed up the recovery time to do
19 stuff like that, plus procedures that we could use, you know. We
20 have to think outside the box.

21 I mean there's ways that we've always done it, but we have to
22 start thinking outside the box on how we can actually do it to
23 evacuate. It's an emergency. We need to find ways to actually
24 evacuate them. I mean even if it's just, hey, pull out a train on
25 track number 1, put it on track number 1. If it's a breach,

1 whatever it is, let the customers walk on the other train. Let's
2 get them out of here, you know. The first thing that we need to
3 do is just find ways to actually safely, you know, get them out of
4 there. That's my only suggestion.

5 Q. Very good. Anything else?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. Very good. I want to thank you for, you know, telling us
8 your story and helping us to understand this situation a little
9 better. So thank you for coming in and participating in this. Do
10 you have any questions for us?

11 A. I was just going to say, well, I'll just wait to see what you
12 guys have to say and I'm waiting for the lessons learned. And I
13 feel like it's one of those things that helps me do my job better,
14 you know. It's like, you know, being in aviation all this time.
15 We learned a lot, accident investigations, you know, what went
16 wrong, what went wrong, you know. You know, and that's part of
17 the experience that I bring to the job. It's just kind of like
18 we'll learn from our mistakes, you know, because I believe, you
19 know, through the incident, I kept playing, am I missing
20 something? Am I missing something? Am I missing something? Am I
21 missing something? What could I have done differently? But, you
22 know, just looking forward to, you know, what the investigation
23 says.

24 Q. Sounds good.

25 DR. JENNER: With that, it is 2:15, and we'll finish up the

1 interview.

2 (Whereupon, at 2:15 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: WMATA METRO TRAIL DERAILMENT
 IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
 ON OCTOBER 12, 2021
 Interview of Olukayode Olawunmi

ACCIDENT NO.: RRD22LR001

PLACE: Landover, Maryland

DATE: October 15, 2021

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber